

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium

High Point, Guilford County, GF7101, Listed 8/28/2012

Nomination by Laura A. W. Phillips

Photographs by Laura A. W. Phillips, August 2011



Overall view



Rear view

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1201 East Fairfield Road not for publication NA
city or town High Point vicinity N/A
state North Carolina code NC county Guilford code 081 zip code 27263

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional
comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Name of Property

Guilford County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: education-related

| | |
|---------|---------|
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: N/A

| | |
|---------|---------|
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |
| <u></u> | <u></u> |

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements

Other: Rustic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
roof ASPHALT
walls STONE

other WOOD
STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Name of Property

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County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or a grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Works Progress Administration

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Name of Property

Guilford County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 1

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 593790 3976180
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization Consultant to the Allen Jay Alumni Association date September 1, 2011

street & number 637 North Spring Street telephone 336-727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Guilford County Board of Education (Maurice O. Green, Superintendent)

street & number 712 North Eugene Street telephone 336-370-8992

city or town Greensboro state NC zip code 27401

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Guilford County, North Carolina

DESCRIPTION

Summary and Setting

Built in 1938-1939, Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium is located in the southeastern corner of the city of High Point in Guilford County, North Carolina. It bears the 1201 East Fairfield Road address of the school, whose campus spreads northwestward from the intersection of East Fairfield and Allen Jay roads. Although there are other buildings on campus, only the gymnasium is being nominated due to the dates of construction or loss of physical integrity of those buildings.

The original Allen Jay School, for grades one through eleven (later twelve), was built in 1928 and faced East Fairfield Road. In 1951, a two-story, flat-roofed, brick-veneered wing for the high school classes was added. In 1956, a new school for the primary grades was built at a nearby campus, and the buildings on the original campus then served grades seven through twelve. Several one-story, brick-veneered buildings were added to the original campus subsequent to 1957 and probably date from the 1960s. These include the library immediately north of the 1951 high school wing, the cafeteria and band building west of the high school wing, and the building for shop classes, later used as the athletic field house, west of the cafeteria and band building. In 1975, a new gymnasium was erected north of the rock gymnasium. In 1979, the 1928 building was demolished to make way for the Allen Jay Middle School, which was constructed the following year. The high school wing survived that demolition, but its windows have been significantly altered. Approximately ten portable classrooms were added to the campus in more recent years.

The gymnasium stands adjacent to Allen Jay Road at the eastern edge of the campus. It is immediately surrounded by a several-foot-wide strip of grass with an irregular line of shrubs bordering the south side. Beyond the grass, the school's asphalt parking lot extends to the south, west, and north. North of the parking lot is the 1975 gymnasium, west of the parking lot is the 1951 high school wing, and south of the parking lot is the main building of the 1980 Allen Jay Middle School. East of the gymnasium, across Allen Jay Road, is a large, vacant tract of land. The nominated property consists of the 1939 gymnasium and its immediate surroundings of approximately one acre. The boundary runs along the property line immediately east of the building, approximately forty feet north and south of the building, and approximately twenty feet west of the building, providing a sufficient historic setting for the gymnasium.

Immediately adjacent to the west end of the gymnasium, but detached from it, is a small, modern, corrugated-metal, pre-fabricated storage building. It stands on concrete blocks and has

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Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
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a shallow gable roof and a door at the west end. Its presence does not diminish the historic integrity of the gymnasium.

Exterior

The gymnasium is a two-story rectangular building measuring approximately 122 by 70 feet. It has a below-grade concrete foundation, rock exterior walls, and a side-gable roof.

The gymnasium's exterior rock walls are its defining feature. Nearly a foot and a half thick, they are constructed of uncoursed local fieldstone set in plain, light-gray mortar. The rocks are irregular in size, color, and arrangement, a result of their various places of origin, the order in which they were laid, and the masons who laid them. The walls are mostly composed of a mix of dark gray and reddish-brown rocks. Some areas, however, especially in the lower half of the building, have irregular bands of light-colored rocks. Some areas show a more expansive use of mortar than others; some use a preponderance of small rocks; in some areas the rocks are not only uncoursed, but seem to be laid with a playful fluidity. The east and west walls each have two ventilators with recessed metal grills at the base of the wall and a louvered vent within the gable peak.

The asphalt-covered gable roof has exposed rafter ends and painted metal gutters along the south and north walls with downspouts at the corners and at two intermediate points along each side. Near the southwest corner of the building, an interior rock chimney rises from the basement (where it is brick) to vent the boiler.

The building is ten bays wide and four bays deep. The east seven bays define the size of the gymnasium, itself, while the west three bays are associated with the building's hall and classrooms. One-over-one-sash aluminum windows are mid-1980s replacements of the original eight-over-eight wood sash. Those opening to the gymnasium have horizontal security bars on the interior that were added after the building was vacated in 2007. Several of the windows have been enclosed in recent years with vinyl or wood. These include the two windows on the east end, the two windows on both floors of the south side's west-end bay, the two windows on both floors of the north-end bay of the west end and, on the north side, the first-story window in the third bay from the west end. (The other two first-story windows at the west end of the north side are hidden by the one-story shed addition there.)

The main entrance is on the south side of the building and occupies the third bay from the west end. It opens to the hall in the classroom section of the building. Originally three concrete steps led to the entrance from the front and two sides. The side steps remain exposed, but a concrete handicap ramp with an iron railing was added to the front in the late twentieth century, covering the front steps. The original double-leaf door had glass panes above wood panels in

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Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
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each leaf. It was replaced with modern metal doors by the late 1970s. A six-light transom survives, but has been covered on the exterior. The entrance has a molded wood surround and a gabled hood. The hood features exposed rafter ends, a beaded-board arched soffit, and braces with shaped ends. Just east of the entrance is a bronze plaque with a banner at the top that is inscribed with "U.S.A." in the center flanked by "North" and "Carolina." Below the banner the plaque says, "Built by Work Projects Administration in Cooperation with County Government 1939."

A secondary entrance, located in the east-end bay of the north side, opens directly to the gymnasium. It has only a single replacement metal door, but its hood matches that of the main entrance, only correspondingly smaller. A wood handicap ramp, added ca. 2000, runs westward from this entrance along the north side of the building.

The building has two small, one-story additions. Near the center of the south side is the mechanical room. Constructed of concrete blocks, it has a shed roof that slopes slightly from west to east and a triangular concrete buttress in the center of the south and east walls. A sliding wood door is on the west end. A small, hinged, metal opening is located in the upper portion of the south wall near the east end. The mechanical room does not appear to open into the gymnasium. It dates from the late 1960s.

The other addition is located at the west end of the north side of the building and dates from the late 1950s or early 1960s. Its concrete-block walls have been stuccoed. The addition has wood corner boards and a shed roof that slopes downward away from the building. Louvered wood vents are located within a vertical-board wood band that runs along the walls beneath the roof. A narrow, single-leaf door is on the west end; two small windows on the upper portion of the north wall have been enclosed. A door from the building's northwest room opens to the addition.

A metal fire escape on the south half of the west wall rises from south to north. It has an intermediate landing. The fire escape does not appear to be original, since its second-floor access is through a former window that has been converted to a door with the bottom of the short door at window sill height. The fire escape was probably added in the 1950s or 1960s.

Interior

The gymnasium occupies approximately the eastern three quarters of the building. The west end of the building contains a north-south entrance hall, two classrooms, a small office, and restrooms on the first floor. Two classrooms, a balcony overlooking the gym, and two miscellaneous rooms created from enclosing part of the balcony are on the second floor. A partial basement is located beneath the entrance hall and the southwest corner of the gymnasium.

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Basement

A wood stair with plain balusters, a molded handrail, and a square newel with a beveled top descends from the entrance hall southward to the partial basement. The basement floor and the inner walls are concrete; the outer walls are rock. The basement consists of two rooms. The first is a long, hall-like space beneath the first-floor hall. According to the 1939 heating plan, it originally had partitions near the north end for changing rooms and showers, but these have been removed. At the south end of the basement, a metal door opens from the east side of the hall to the boiler room. This room contains the boiler, a splayed vent in the rock outside wall, and a brick chimney stack in the southwest corner.

Gymnasium

The gymnasium measures approximately eighty-eight by sixty-six feet, with a height of eighteen feet from the floor to the roof joists. The floor is maple. The room does not have a ceiling as such. Instead, the wood trusses, rafters, and roof decking are all exposed and painted the same neutral color as the upper walls. The truss system, which rests on the joists, consists of central beams that form a V. Outward from the V are diagonal beams. The truss beams are composed of four boards held together by metal straps. Secondary beams appear to have been added later, since they are not painted. Set diagonally but in the opposite direction from the original truss beams, they rest on the joists and connect midway on the original beams, providing extra support. Circular, reflective, industrial lighting fixtures hang from the rafters.

The exterior north, east, and south walls are painted rock, and the interior west wall is sheathed with modern vertical-board paneling beneath the vertical beaded board balcony wall. Large metal supports for full-court basketball goals are at the east and west ends of the gymnasium. The original boxed-wood bleachers on the north and south sides of the gymnasium were removed in later years when two sets of half-court goals were installed on the north and south walls. Both the original wood scoreboard and a painting on rock of the school's jaybird mascot are on the east wall. In the southwest corner of the room, a rock flue rises from the basement boiler room through the roof.

A door to the exterior is located at the east end of the north wall. Two double-leaf wood doors open from the west wall to the hall. The 1939 plan shows that single doors in the north half of the west wall opened to a pair of locker rooms. These doors have been covered by the modern paneling.

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Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Guilford County, North Carolina

West End: First Floor

The west quarter of the building has two floors, in addition to the partial basement. A comparison of the 1939 heating plans with the current floor plans shows what remains the same and what has changed.

On the first floor are a hall, two classrooms, a small office, and a pair of restrooms. The hall measures nine feet wide and forty feet long. Its floor is covered with a combination of one-foot square linoleum tiles and carpet. The walls and ceiling appear to be sheetrocked. Two pairs of wood doors on the east side of the hall access the gymnasium. On the west side of the hall near the entrance, an enclosed stair leads down to the basement and up to the second floor. A ticket booth that originally stood just north of the stair has been removed. It was replaced by a new ticket office converted from the two small restrooms that originally stood at the north end of the hall. The office has a door on the west end of the wall shared with the hall and a sliding-glass window that opens to the hall. An extension that creates a small storage room was built on the west end of the office and juts into the north classroom space.

Adjacent doors at the center of the west side of the hall open to two classrooms. Each measures approximately twenty-one feet wide and thirty-three feet long. Originally, the classrooms probably had hardwood floors and beaded board walls and ceilings like those remaining on the second floor. Now the floors are covered with one-foot-square linoleum tiles, the walls have a modern covering – except for the outer walls, which are painted rock – and the ceilings have been lowered with a dropped grid with acoustical tiles. A small enclosure that projects from the east wall of the south classroom holds air conditioning equipment.

Two restrooms located north of the current ticket office are accessed from the east wall of the north classroom. The 1939 plans show that originally this space was occupied by two locker rooms with showers that opened to the gymnasium instead of to the classroom. At the north end of the north classroom, a door opens to the small, one-story addition at the northwest corner of the building. It was originally used for dressing rooms but was later converted to storage space.

West End: Second Floor

An enclosed stair with beaded-board walls and ceiling rises from the first-floor hall to the second floor, where there are two classrooms, the surviving portion of the balcony, and two narrow rooms created by enclosing the rest of the balcony. From the landing at the top of the stair, doors open to the east, north, and west.

On the east, a five-panel wood door opens to a landing, from which steps lead down to the balcony. The landing and steps are enclosed on the west side by the flush-boarded wood wall

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and on the east and north by a solid wood balustrade. The balcony holds five boxed wood risers, which are identical to the bleachers that originally stood on the gymnasium floor. A low, beaded-board wall topped by a horizontal iron rail extends across the front (east side) of the balcony, protecting its occupants from falling to the gymnasium floor. The front of the balcony is also separated from the gymnasium space by string netting that rises nearly to the roof ridge. The balcony originally extended the full north-south width of the gymnasium. However, in the late twentieth century, the rest of the balcony was framed-in and enclosed to create two long, narrow rooms, which are finished with carpeted flooring, vertical plywood-paneled walls, and a dropped ceiling. The north door at the top of the stair landing enters the southernmost of these two connected rooms. Interestingly, except for the removal of the balcony seating in this enclosed section, original fabric has been left intact behind the modern paneling. From the balcony landing, one can look northward and see the flush-boarded west wall and the roof trusses on the east with its protective string netting. The west wall of this area retains a clock, which is enclosed in a wire cage. The low balcony retaining wall, iron railing, and string netting remain intact on the gymnasium side of the enclosed rooms.

From the landing at the top of the stair, a door with four glass panes in the upper half and three horizontal wood panels in the lower half opens to the southernmost of the two west classrooms on the second floor. The 1939 plans show that originally there was one long, north-south room at this location. It was built as a band room, with shallow risers at the north end. Apparently early on, a partition was added two thirds of the way to the north end, making two rooms. The north room with its risers became the choral room; the south room became another classroom. The two rooms retain hardwood floors, painted rock exterior walls, a beaded-board interior east wall, and a beaded-board ceiling with a boxed beam running north-south down the center. In the south room, the ceiling has been covered with an acoustical-tile dropped ceiling.

The south room has a closet with shelves and a five-horizontal-panel wood door in the southeast corner. In the southwest corner are built-in wood shelves that form an L by following the corner. Radiators remain intact. A window on the west wall has been converted to a short door that provides an exit to the fire escape. A long, painted blackboard with a central cork board and a molded shelf along the bottom edge runs along the north half of the east wall. The partition between the two rooms has narrow, tongue-and-groove horizontal board sheathing, two three-light horizontal windows in the west half, and a door in the east half that matches the door to the stair landing.

The smaller, north, room is largely consumed by six shallow wood risers. Rough wood open shelving was added to the north, east, and west walls in later years. A five-panel door in the southeast corner of the room opens to the northern of the two rooms that were enclosed from the balcony.

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Integrity Assessment

The Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium exhibits ample integrity in terms of its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Located on its original site on the Allen Jay School campus, it retains its simple, hulking size and form and rough-laid exterior rock walls that define its overall character. Its physical character relates it not only to the particular story of the community's involvement in its construction, but also to its association with the rustic school buildings being erected by the WPA, particularly in the mountains of western North Carolina, during the Depression. The few exterior alterations, including the replacement of the window sash (but the retention of the pattern and size of the windows) and two small additions, have not compromised the exterior design of the building. Although there have been some interior alterations, as described in the preceding narrative, most of the salient features of the gymnasium and classroom sections of the building survive to convey how the building was used and how it looked during its historic period. Other buildings on the campus, as previously described, are not included in the nomination due to their dates of construction or loss of physical integrity.

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Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Guilford County, North Carolina

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium meets Criterion C for its local architectural significance in the High Point area of Guilford County. It is representative of the type of rustic stone buildings erected by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the mountains of western North Carolina during the Great Depression. It is somewhat unusual, however, for having been built not in the mountains, but in North Carolina's central piedmont. The gymnasium's period of significance is 1939, the year in which its construction was completed.

Allen Jay School opened in the fall of 1928, a product of North Carolina's drive to consolidate numerous small schools into fewer, larger, and better schools. It initially served grades one through high school. Beginning in 1937, the Allen Jay School Board and its principal, Tenor Bennison, began to plan for the addition of a gymnasium at the school. Because this was still during the Depression, the school faced many obstacles in trying to gain local and state approval for building the structure. Solving these problems included a meeting with President Roosevelt in the Oval Office of the White House by Principal Bennison and Guilford County Superintendent of Schools Thomas R. Foust. Ultimately, the gymnasium was built under the supervision of the WPA with labor provided by the WPA and materials donated by the Allen Jay community. In addition to lumber for the sub-flooring and roof trusses, these materials included locally gathered rocks for the load-bearing exterior walls that gave the building its defining rustic character. The county provided the heating system for the gymnasium.

The gymnasium is a two-story rectangular building measuring approximately 122 by 70 feet with a side-gable roof. The foot-and-a-half-thick rock walls are laid with uncoursed fieldstones set in plain, light-gray mortar. The rocks are irregular in size, color, and arrangement, a result of their various local sites of origin, the order in which they were laid, and the masons who laid them. The gymnasium's two entrances are sheltered by bracketed, gabled hoods. On the interior, the east three quarters of the building are consumed with the gymnasium; the west quarter primarily houses a hall, classrooms, and a balcony overlooking the basketball court.

In 1979, the last high school class graduated from Allen Jay School. After that, a new building replaced the 1928 school building, and Allen Jay became a middle school. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the High Point Parks and Recreation Department used the gymnasium as the Allen Jay Recreation Center. The middle school has now closed, and the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium stands vacant.

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Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
Guilford County, North Carolina

Historical Background

The 1920s was a time of both prosperity and a continued drive to improve education in North Carolina. In particular, the decade saw the consolidation of countless small schools into fewer, larger, and better schools. When the Allen Jay School opened in the fall of 1928, it was a product of the consolidation of Springfield and Oak Shade schools. Located outside the city limits of High Point at that time, it was the first school in the southeastern section of Guilford County to include high school grades. Initially serving grades one through eleven, it added the twelfth grade in 1945, when Guilford County Schools changed from an eleven- to a twelve-year system. The school was named for Ohio native Allen Jay, a Quaker minister who came to North Carolina immediately after the Civil War at the request of the Baltimore Association and established numerous schools throughout the state. His home was in the Springfield area (Brower and Speight, 2-4, 18).

The Allen Jay School opened with an enrollment of 300 students, forty of whom were in high school. As the school grew, both the elementary and the high school divisions met the requirements for accreditation. The one-story brick school had indoor bathrooms and central steam heat, an auditorium and a library, and classrooms that doubled as a cafeteria. However, it did not have a gymnasium. As the school's athletic program developed, basketball was practiced on an outdoor court and games were played at the Salvation Army gymnasium. A Parent Teachers Association (PTA) was organized when the school opened, and through the years it was a major source of support for the school. The PTA raised money by various means to help provide for many of the needs of the school, including library books, window shades, auditorium curtains, robes and music for the glee club, and athletic equipment. However, not only the PTA, but also the tightly knit Allen Jay community at large strongly supported the school during its fifty years of operation. (Brower and Speight, 16-18).

The story of the building of the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium is one of perseverance in the face of numerous obstacles. At the center of the story is Tenor Bennison, the principal of Allen Jay School at the time, who shepherded the gymnasium project from the initial idea to completion. In this endeavor, Bennison received support and guidance from Thomas R. Foust, the Guilford County Superintendent of Schools from 1904 to 1945. According to local newspapers, that was longer than any other superintendent in United States history. During those years, Foust led the county into the modern era of education. In 1938, he was appointed agent for the Guilford County Board of Education in dealing with the Works Progress Administration (Batchelor, 51; Board of Education Minutes, 92).

In the winter of 1937, talk began at Allen Jay School about building a much-needed gymnasium. At one of the Allen Jay School Board meetings, a proposal was made that the Allen

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Jay community, along with the county, build a gymnasium for the school. The board asked Principal Bennison to take the proposal to the school superintendent and to the Guilford County Commission. Superintendent Foust liked the idea, though initially he discouraged Bennison. He believed that since only one other school in the county had a gymnasium, the county commissioners would turn down Allen Jay School's request so that it would not appear that they were neglecting the other schools. So, Bennison did not approach either the Guilford County Board of Education or the Guilford County Commission at that time, but instead returned to the Allen Jay School Board (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 24).

Interestingly, in November 1938, Summerfield School at the north end of the county made their own request to the county school board for a gymnasium. The board's response to Summerfield was doubtless what it would have been to Allen Jay – that it had no funds in the budget for that purpose (Board of Education Minutes, 94). After all, the county, as the rest of the country, was still in the midst of the Great Depression.

The board at Allen Jay School then proposed that the parents, students, and members of the community build the gymnasium themselves, since it appeared that they could not get help from the county. Uncut timber could be donated, and a portable sawmill could be brought to the school to convert it to lumber. The board also suggested that the principal contact the Works Progress Administration (WPA), whose closest office was in neighboring Winston-Salem, to request help with the project and to lead the way (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 24).

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was established in 1935 when the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act was passed as part of the continuing efforts of President Roosevelt's New Deal. It was a public works program that employed jobless citizens and built useful public structures. In North Carolina, the WPA spent \$173.7 million between 1935 and 1942. (In 1939, its name was changed to Work Projects Administration, and that is the name that is on the plaque next to the gymnasium's front entrance.) Constructing school buildings was a large part of the program and, with its predecessor – the public works program of the Emergency Relief Act – the WPA aided in the construction of 500 schools in sixty-two counties across North Carolina. Among the important factors that made schools and gymnasiums ideal candidates for WPA funds were the increasing recognition of the importance of modern school facilities and the potential for wider community use of these buildings for programs and other activities (Wyatt, 11-12). In the High Point area, there were several public works projects supported by the WPA or its predecessor programs. In addition to the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium, these included the Art Deco-style United States Post Office, Blair Park, City Lake Park, and the project to lower the railroad tracks in downtown High Point. In 1939, the name of the federal agency changed from Works Progress Administration to Work Projects Administration (Stoesen, 43 and 51; Briggs, 77, 147, 232-233)

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When Principal Bennison traveled to Winston-Salem to discuss the proposed project with the WPA, he was met with encouragement. The Winston-Salem office said that they could provide eighty percent of the labor. They recommended that Bennison return to the Allen Jay School Board and, along with community participants, draw up a tentative plan for the layout and construction of the gymnasium, along with an estimate of what it would take to build it (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 24).

Around the same time, Superintendent of Schools Foust, who was facing requests by two schools for gymnasiums, wrote to W. F. Credle, Director of Schoolhouse Planning for the state, in September 1938 asking Credle to send him "a set of plans for gymnasiums with rooms for Home Economics and Agriculture attached at the end, like you were showing us at the Boone meeting." He also requested cost estimates (Foust letter). Credle responded by sending Foust blue prints and specifications for a combination vocational-physical education building that had been approved by the federal Public Works Administration for a school in Harnett County. He also supplied cost estimates, although he warned that they were probably low (Credle letter). Whether this information influenced the plan of the gymnasium at Allen Jay School is not known.

Those involved with the project at Allen Jay School "called in some help," according to Tenor Bennison, and drew up floor plans for a wood-framed gymnasium with a basement under the west end for the heating system (Bennison Interview). According to their figuring, the donated timber was more than adequate for the construction job (Brower and Speight, 24).

Bennison then returned to the Winston-Salem WPA office with the plans. After reviewing them, the staff said that the WPA could complete the project. However, to proceed, approval had to be obtained from the local governing board, which, in this case, was the Guilford County Commission (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 24).

Bennison again met with Superintendent Foust, asking him to assist in taking the gymnasium request before the county commission. Not surprisingly, the commission refused to approve the project on the grounds that if Allen Jay School built a gymnasium, the other schools in the county would want one too. Money was the primary issue, and the commissioners were unwilling to enact a county tax increase that they felt would be necessary to fund the construction of numerous gymnasiums (Brower and Speight, 25).

Superintendent Foust, however, was not willing to let the project die so easily. He recommended that Bennison and the Allen Jay School Board complete the project paperwork and submit it to the WPA office in Winston-Salem with the request that they forward it to the WPA office in Washington (Brower and Speight, 25).

When six months had passed with no response from Washington, Bennison again contacted Superintendent Foust for assistance. A strong Democrat, Foust contacted Clyde Hoey,

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then Governor of North Carolina and, later, U. S. Senator, to see if he could encourage some progress in the matter. As a result, a meeting was arranged in Washington for the Foust, Bennison, and several Allen Jay community members. The North Carolinians thought that they were going to meet with the head of the WPA. Needless to say, they were surprised to discover that they were actually to meet with President Roosevelt in the Oval Office. Principal Bennison told the President about the gymnasium project, the efforts by the Allen Jay community to make it happen, and that they had not heard from the WPA headquarters in Washington in the six months since the project proposal had been submitted. Roosevelt then placed a call to the WPA office. After their fifteen-minute meeting with the President, the North Carolinians departed the White House and returned home (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 25).

Within a month, Bennison received word from the WPA office in Winston-Salem that the project had been approved in Washington. Next, the plans had to be approved by the state (presumably the Department of Public Instruction, Division of Schoolhouse Planning), so Bennison carried the plans to Raleigh. However, rather than receiving the expected approval, he was told that the state could not approve a building of that size that was of frame construction. Instead, it would have to be of masonry construction (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 26).

When Bennison reported the state's decision to the Allen Jay School Board, one of the board members suggested that those associated with the school as well as the entire Allen Jay community could gather native rocks that were plentiful in the area and use them for the masonry walls. The lumber could be used for the sub-flooring and roof trusses. At that point, word went out and the community began to collect rocks and bring them to the school by any means possible, until they felt they had enough to build the school (Brower and Speight, 26).

When Bennison went back to the WPA office and told them of the change in plan, they were surprised at the state's decision, since they had built larger frame buildings around the country and even in North Carolina in earlier years. Nevertheless, the WPA revised the building plans to accommodate the use of rock walls. The new plans had to go once again to Washington for approval, which was granted (Bennison Interview).

Still, to be built, the project had to receive approval from the Guilford County Commissioners, who had already turned it down once. As it happened, a social gathering had been scheduled at the courthouse at which the commissioners and other local notables would be present. Bennison took advantage of the event to present the gymnasium plan to the commissioners and tell them of the meeting with President Roosevelt. Once the commissioners realized that the school was proposing to build a gymnasium for which the community would supply most of the materials, the WPA would supply most of the labor, and all that was needed from them was their official approval, they began to look at the project more favorably. They

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asked if a classroom could be included in the building, and Bennison replied that the plans already included not only a classroom, but also a band room upstairs. So the Guilford County Commission decided to sponsor the project. In addition, because it was to include classrooms, they pledged to provide the heating system (Bennison Interview; Brower and Speight, 26; Board of Education Minutes, 111-112, 115).

With the county's approval secured, work soon began on the gymnasium. The WPA drew up the final construction documents and the community began to cut the lumber from the donated timber, deliver it to the school, and stack it. Soon, there were piles and piles of both rocks and lumber on the school grounds. In his annual principal's report for 1937-38, Bennison remarked that, "A new \$28,000 Gymnasium is being constructed." Work continued on the gymnasium and was completed in 1939. The building boasted a maple floor on the basketball court and glass blackboards (no longer extant) supplied by a local patron in the classrooms. After the gymnasium's completion, the WPA featured a picture of it in a newsletter sent to all their offices. The project was ultimately successful because of the combined efforts of the school, the Allen Jay community, the WPA, and the Guilford County Commission (Bennison Interview; High School Principal's Annual Report).

The first year the gymnasium was in use, the boys won the state rural basketball championship. The girls won the Piedmont Tournament several years in a row. In fact, the school soon became well known for its winning sports teams (Brower and Speight, 18).

A particular point of pride for Allen Jay School was that basketball Hall of Fame coach Kay Yow started her coaching career there. In 1964, having just graduated from East Carolina University, Yow applied for a position teaching English at Allen Jay School. Principal Doyle Early told her that he would hire her for the position, if she would agree to coach the girls basketball team as well. She agreed, and thus began a long and impressive career coaching women's basketball (Brower and Speight, 20). Yow began her collegiate coaching career in 1971, when she was named head coach at Elon College. In 1975, she became head coach at North Carolina State University, where she made her biggest mark, and remained there until her death in 2009. During her illustrious career, Yow won 737 games, coached N. C. State to four Atlantic Coast Conference tournament championships, and coached the U. S. Women's Team to gold medals at the 1988 Olympics (Goldstein).

While Allen Jay School reveled in its athletics program in the years following the construction of the rock gymnasium, there were other signs of growth and success at the school. In 1951, a two-story brick wing was added to the original 1928 building. Intended for use primarily by the high school grades, it included a library, home economics room, and other classrooms. In 1955-1956, a seven-acre athletic field with a track, football and baseball fields, and concrete bleachers that could seat 3,000 was added. At the same time, a new elementary

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school was constructed on a nearby, but separate, campus. The original campus then served grades seven through twelve. In the 1960s, a cafeteria and band building and a shop, later used as the athletic field house, were completed west of the high school wing, and a library was built immediately north of the high school wing. In 1975, a new gymnasium was constructed north of the old gymnasium (Brower and Speight, 18-19, 21; *High Point Enterprise*, October 10, 1954).

In 1979, the last class of high school seniors graduated from Allen Jay School. From the initial graduating class of eight in 1931, the last graduating class had grown to seventy-nine. In the fall of 1979, the high school grades at Allen Jay School were consolidated with Sumner High School to form the new South Guilford High School. At that point, the original 1928 building at Allen Jay School was replaced by a new building, and Allen Jay became a middle school (Brower and Speight, 22; *High Point Enterprise*, June 1, 2006). The Allen Jay Middle School is now closed.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the rock gymnasium was used as the Allen Jay Recreation Center operated by the High Point Parks and Recreation Department. However, since 2007 it has stood vacant, the last surviving building from the years when Allen Jay School served grades one through twelve. As such, it holds important memories for many people in the Allen Jay community. The Allen Jay Alumni Association and the Allen Jay Historical Society are leading an effort to preserve the building.

Architecture Context

The Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium is a highly unusual, if not unique, building in High Point and the immediate surrounding environs of southwestern Guilford County. Within the High Point area, the gymnasium can be viewed within the context of school facilities, projects of the WPA and other federal programs, and stone buildings of the period. However, its closest architectural relationships are with a gymnasium in northern Guilford County and with stone buildings erected in western North Carolina as part of federal New Deal programs during the Great Depression.

In High Point, several schools, including the Allen Jay School, were constructed during the 1920s and early 1930s as part of school consolidation. The last of these were Ferndale Junior High School in 1930 and Brentwood School in 1931, both brick buildings. Ferndale, like the slightly earlier High Point Central High School with which it shared a campus, is Neo-Gothic in style. Brentwood School features an Art Deco cast-concrete entrance surround. After these schools, there was little additional school construction until the 1950s, at which point schools tended to have simple modernist designs and were generally one story in height. Sandwiched between these two periods of construction was the WPA-built Allen Jay School Rock

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Gymnasium, completed in 1939. Unlike any other school facility in the area, it was a large utilitarian structure of simple design with load-bearing outer walls composed of native rocks gathered by school and community members for that specific purpose (Briggs, 80).

During the 1930s, there was a succession of federal economic recovery programs designed to provide work for the unemployed while producing useful public structures and other facilities. Several projects in High Point were carried out by these programs in the early 1930s. Among them were the United States Post Office, built in 1932 of Indiana limestone and designed in the Art Deco style, the development of both Blair Park in 1931 and City Lake Park in 1934, and the lowering of the railroad tracks in downtown High Point. The Works Progress Administration, which operated from 1935 to 1942 (with a name change to Work Projects Administration in 1939), was probably the best known of the federal programs and was the one that funded the construction of the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium (Briggs, 77, 147, 232-233; Stoesen, 43 and 51).

Stone has never been the preferred building material in High Point, and there are few examples from the second quarter of the twentieth century. Other than the 1939 Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium and the 1932 United States Post Office, the others are products of the prosperous 1920s. Known examples include First Presbyterian Church and St. Mary's Episcopal Church, both completed in 1928, and the 1925 Grayson House and the ca. 1927 Rones House. All exhibit architectural styles popular during the decade, and all were built with stone imported from outside the High Point area. Only the gymnasium used locally-gathered rocks and displays a plainly utilitarian, rustic appearance.

Published in 1936, *Emergency Relief in North Carolina* illustrates numerous gymnasiums erected throughout the state with assistance from the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, which functioned from 1932 to 1935 (Kirk et al.). These images provide a larger lens through which to view the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium and point out two characteristics of note. First, most of the gymnasiums featured in the book were of frame or brick construction. Only two were of stone construction, and they were located in the mountainous counties of western North Carolina. Second, of the more than twenty gymnasiums shown, no two were alike. Instead, they represented a wide range of sizes, forms, roof types, and levels of refinement, making it clear that the designs followed in building the gymnasiums were not derived from one or two set of plans used repeatedly.

Initially, the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium was to be of frame construction. However, when the state would not approve the plans for a frame gymnasium of that size, requiring that it be of masonry construction, the Allen Jay School Board turned to load-bearing rock for the exterior walls. This was an expedient choice, since the area had an abundance of rocks and the board believed they could undertake a "rock drive," asking those associated with

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the school as well as those in the Allen Jay community to gather and bring rocks to the school for the purpose of building the gymnasium. However, the choice was also fortuitous, because the WPA had ample experience building rustic stone schools and other buildings and structures in western North Carolina. It is to these buildings that the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium is most closely associated in terms of its architecture.

The WPA constructed buildings in most, if not all, western North Carolina counties. These included a variety of public buildings, but especially schools. Many were built of stone. The rustic style of these buildings derived from the design standards developed by the National Park Service for national parks. These standards emphasized a close harmony between built structures and the natural environment, and in western North Carolina this often called for the use of native stone or rock, massive logs, and/or heavy timbers (Griffith, 9). As it happened, the use of native rocks with irregular coursing for the construction of the gymnasium at the Allen Jay School in piedmont North Carolina also reflected well the National Park Service's design standards.

While this rustic styling was relatively rare in piedmont North Carolina, especially when compared with mountainous western North Carolina, it is interesting that Guilford County possesses not only the rock gymnasium at Allen Jay School, but also the rock gymnasium at Summerfield School in the northern part of the county. Like the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium, the Summerfield School Gymnasium was a project of the WPA and was completed in 1939. However, other than the use of stone for the exterior walls, the physical character of the two is rather different. At Summerfield, there is more consistency in the laying of the stones along with the use of grapevine mortar joints. Overall, the Summerfield School Gymnasium has a more refined, polished appearance than the gymnasium at Allen Jay School, which is decidedly more home-grown and rustic in appearance.

The distinctive rusticity of the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium results from several of its exterior features. The nearly foot-and-a-half-thick walls are constructed of uncoursed local fieldstone set in plain, light-gray mortar. The rocks are irregular in size, arrangement, and color, with dark gray and reddish-brown rocks predominating. The amount of mortar used to set the rocks varies noticeably. Other features contributing the gymnasium's rustic character include the rock chimney that rises from the interior of the building, the exposed rafter ends of the gable roof, and the braced, gabled hoods with exposed rafter ends that shelter the two entrances.

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GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the heavy black line on the accompanying Property Map, drawn to a scale of 1" = 100'. It consists of an approximately one-acre portion of Guilford County Tax Parcel 0195955, the tract on which the former Allen Jay School stands.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property is drawn to include the Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium and its immediate setting of narrow lawn and adjacent asphalt parking, while excluding modern buildings and larger parking areas. The boundary runs along the property line immediately east of the building, approximately forty feet north and south of the building, and approximately twenty feet west of the building, providing a sufficient historic setting for the gymnasium. The nominated property constitutes the original site of the rock gymnasium.

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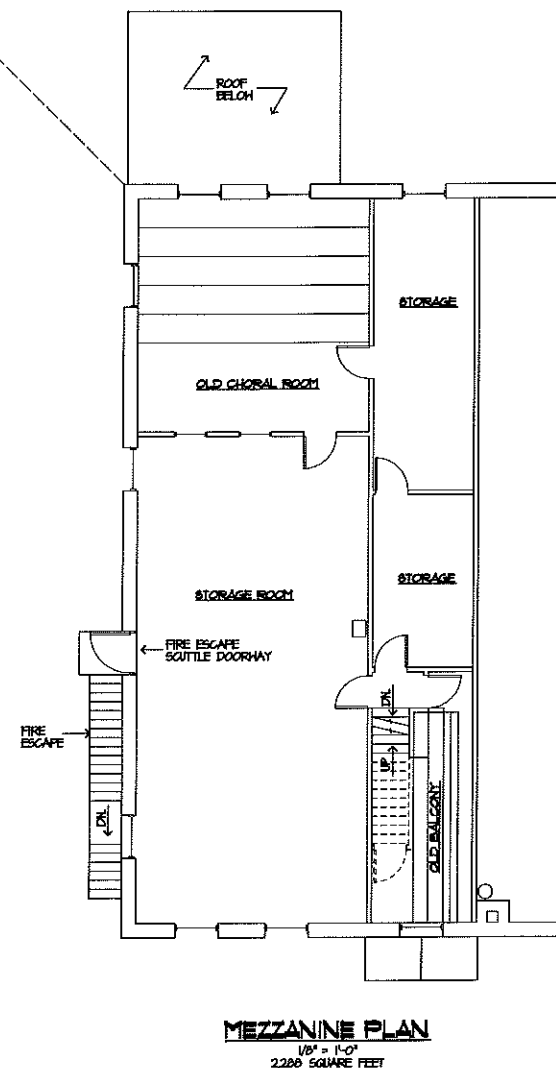
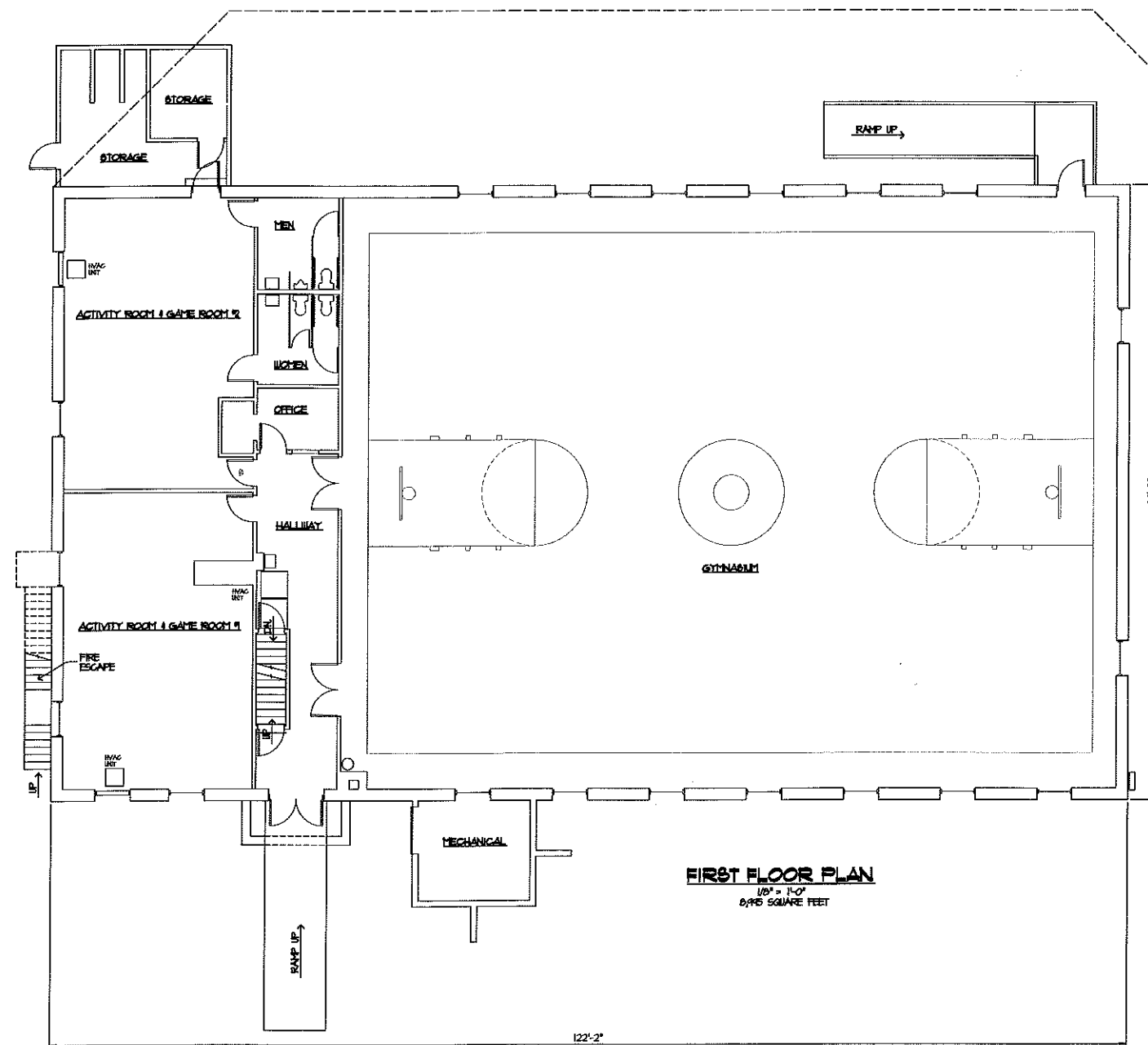
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PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information for #1-5 applies to all nomination photographs.

- 1) Allen Jay School Rock Gymnasium
- 2) High Point, Guilford County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) August 18, 2011
- 5) CD: NCHPO, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 6-7) 1: Setting along Allen Jay Road, view to northwest
 2: Oblique view of south side and west end, view to northeast
 3: East end, view to west
 4: North side, view to south
 5: Detail of hood over front (south) entrance, view to northwest
 6: Gymnasium, view to northeast
 7: Gymnasium, view to west
 8: Wood bleachers in balcony at west end of gymnasium, view to north
 9: Second floor southwest classroom, view to northeast
 10: Second floor northwest music room with risers, view to northeast



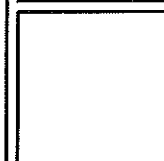
RECREATION BUILDING
 ALLEN JAY MIDDLE SCHOOL
 1201 EAST FAIRFIELD ROAD
 HIGH POINT, NC 27263
 DECEMBER 22, 2004

ALLEN JAY SCHOOL ROCK GYMNASIUM
 - FLOOR PLANS -

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RECREATION BUILDING
ALLEN JAY MIDDLE SCHOOL
 GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS
 NORTH CAROLINA
 HIGH POINT



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